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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

LITERARY PRIZES

America, the most opulent of nations, the most interested in the arts, the most anxious to excel, the most liberal, the most gracious!

This reflection is given off from my mind by two announcements which reach me this morning.

One of the DeGoncourt prizes has been awarded to M. Rene Benjamin, and the *Prix Lasserre* has been given to Charles le Goffic.

I need scarcely remind the reader that for some centuries Paris and London have been the centers of the world's literature. I believe I have pointed out as contributory causes to this effect the treatment accorded to writers in both cities. In England almost any writer of unusual talent who has not systematized and commercialized his production, can get support from the state: first, by pension for life; second, by temporary relief from a royal fund for that purpose. The pensions are announced publicly. The special donations from the royal fund are never published; they are known only to the recipient, to such people as he chooses to tell, and to the two literati of good standing who vouch for his deserts. Not only many of the best writers, but many of the writers who later in life have made very great commercial successes, have enjoyed this bounty in bad seasons and times of stress (late and early).

For this reason it is more likely that a man will turn his thought toward permanent writing in England than in

Literary Prizes

America. Permanent writing does not bring an immediate cash reward, at least it is not likely to. In America the whole strain is on the aspirant. In England the strain is shared to a certain degree by institutions.

London and Paris have other advantages, advantages which America can not compete with until her civilization has been enriched by the presence of generations of excellent writers; but in this matter of cash there is no excuse for our country lagging behind.

France is so poor that I have heard French officials complaining that they can't get funds to catalogue their national library efficiently. The Prix Lasserre is eight thousand francs (sixteen hundred dollars).

The other bit of news to which I referred is in *The Times* the report of a sale of manuscripts, etc., in New York. It seems that Mr. John Lewis has purchased an extra-illustrated copy of the Pickering edition of the *Compleat Angler* (1836) for the sum of \$1,650. It is obvious that Mr. Lewis is not competing with DeGoncourt and Lasserre, and that America has as yet no serious intention of competing with London and Paris.

E. P.

WHEREFORE THE POET?

From "Democracy"—(unpublished)

Wherefore the poet? What good does he do? Is he not a trifle, and something of a nuisance?